



## DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

### INFORMATION SERVICE

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

For Release MARCH 15, 1961

#### ATTACK ON FISH PASSAGE PROBLEM ON MIDDLE SNAKE ANNOUNCED

Secretary of the Interior Stewart L. Udall today announced a vigorous, short-range attack on the problem of passing fish downstream at the proposed high dam sites on the Middle Snake River in Idaho.

He said this is the first step in a comprehensive review of the Middle Snake development potential including power, water storage for river regulation, recreation, fish, and other resource uses.

In a letter to the Federal Power Commission, which currently is holding hearings on applications for construction of dams at the Nez Perce and High Mountain Sheep sites, Secretary Udall recommended that the Commission defer action on the applications until the Department's accelerated fish-passage studies have been completed.

Secretary Udall said the Department has set the end of 1964 as the target date for completion of a study program. He added, however, the scope of the studies will depend on the amount of money made available by the Congress for this purpose.

Secretary Udall said dams proposed for construction in the Middle Snake area could have a disastrous effect on anadromous fish, especially in the Salmon River which provides an estimated 50% of the Snake River run unless proven methods are found to protect the downstream migrants.

"We intend to learn as much as possible about which direction a sound development program should go. We believe that potential alternative sources of new power make prudent such a delay in further consideration of projects for the Middle Snake," Secretary Udall said.

He stressed that Administration favors comprehensive basin development, but said, "We can't wait 10 or 15 more years."

Secretary Udall said the Department is "open minded" on the problem of additional storage. He said it would be a mistake to single out one particular dam in the studies, saying, "We need to know all we possibly can in the shortest possible time about full basin development."

A copy of Secretary Udall's letter to the Federal Power Commission is attached.

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UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
Office of the Secretary  
Washington 25, D. C.

March 15, 1961

Dear Mr. Kuykendall:

On November 21, 1960, the Department commented on the amended application for major licenses for the proposed Mountain Sheep Project (FPC No. 2243) and for the proposed Nez Perce Project (FPC No. 2273). The Department of the Interior's position on these applications has been reviewed and we now desire to supplement our letter of November 21, 1960.

In the view of this Administration there are few more important problems before the Nation than the proper development and conservation of our natural resources. As the President stated in his recent message to the Congress:

"This is not a matter of concern for only one section of the country. All those who fish and hunt, who build industrial centers, who need electricity to light their homes and lighten their burdens, who require water for home, industrial, and recreational purposes--in short, every citizen in every state of the Union--all have a stake in a sound resources program under the progressive principles of national leadership first forged by Pinchot and Theodore Roosevelt, and backed by the essential cooperation of state and local governments."

The Administration desires that in the case of the Middle Snake area decisions be based upon thorough investigation.

In discussions with our fish biologists, we have concluded that a solution to the problem of downstream fish passage has not yet been found either for the proposed High Mountain Sheep Project nor the proposed Nez Perce Project.

We are unwilling to postpone vigorous attack upon this problem. The acknowledged need for full development of the hydroelectric resources of the Nation in a manner consistent with other natural resources affected will not permit procrastination. With the concurrence of the President, the Department therefore has decided upon a crash program to try to find the answers, and will shortly request from Congress the necessary funds to finance this program. We believe there should be field tests on the Snake River of methods of getting fingerlings safely through deep reservoirs and high dams.

Our objective is not merely to find ways to save the salmon runs in the Middle Snake and Salmon rivers. We want, in addition, to develop fish passage facilities that will save the salmon runs in the Imnaha and the upper Snake and its tributaries.

We have set the end of 1964 as the target date by which time to learn as much as possible the direction in which a sound development program should go. We believe that potential alternative sources of new power make prudent such a delay in further consideration of projects for the Middle Snake.

Pending completion of the accelerated fish studies, it would serve no useful purpose for personnel of the Department to appear as witnesses in the pending proceedings. We are, therefore, recalling permission heretofore granted for them to appear as witnesses.

For the reasons above stated, the Department of the Interior recommends that neither the proposed High Mountain Sheep Project nor the proposed Nez Perce Project be licensed at this time. The Administration is hopeful that in the light of these circumstances, the Commission can recess or suspend the present hearing for the duration of the study period. The Department of the Interior should be in a much better position to recommend a desirable program for the Middle Snake River development at that time.

Sincerely yours,

(Sgd) Stewart L. Udall  
Secretary of the Interior

Hon. Jerome K. Kuykendall, Chairman  
Federal Power Commission  
Washington, D. C.